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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 009029

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/27/2016
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: GOC AND ELN SAID TO AGREE ON CEASE-FIRE, TO BE
ANNOUNCED OCTOBER, LIKELY IMPLEMENTED DECEMBER

REF: A. BOGOTA 8840 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. BOGOTA 8649 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Civil society guarantors said the GOC and ELN agreed in Venezuela on a framework peace agreement that should be announced at the end of peace talks in Havana October 20-25. The agreement addressed a mutual GOC-ELN cease-fire and related humanitarian issues, ELN political activities, the role of the international community, and civil society involvement. The agreement did not set a date for cease-fire implementation, but the guarantors said the parties would aim for the end of the year. While not mentioned in the text, the guarantors said the ELN negotiating team and Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo linked release of ELN kidnap victims to the ELN obtaining financing for its peace process activities and other costs. End summary.

Guarantors Say GOC and ELN Agree on Cease-Fire, Peace Terms

[1](#)2. (C) Guarantors Moritz Akerman and Alvaro Jimenez told us recent meetings in Caracas between an ELN contingent (military commander Antonio Garcia, negotiator Francisco Galan, and imprisoned terrorist Juan Carlos Cuellar) and Restrepo reached an understanding on key points, which the guarantors expect to be announced at the conclusion of the fourth round of GOC-ELN exploratory talks in Cuba October 20-25. The points related to cease-fire and associated humanitarian issues, ELN political activities, the role of the international community, and civil society involvement.

[1](#)3. (C) The guarantors said the cease-fire basket was the most complicated. It envisaged a mutual cease-fire, to be implemented after GOC-ELN discussions on technical issues such as concentration of ELN forces and security arrangements to protect the ELN against FARC attacks. Akerman said the

parties did not agree in Caracas on a date by which the cease-fire would be implemented, but side discussions focused on the end of the year. The cease-fire basket included assistance to communities displaced by conflict, release of ELN prisoners, and demining. ELN kidnap victims were not explicitly addressed in the agreement, but Akerman said the GOC and ELN had an understanding the ELN will release kidnap victims as it receives financing for its peace process activities and other costs. Akerman reported Garcia responded to Restrepo's question about kidnap victims by saying, "we know we have to release them, but we also have to have financing." Norwegian MFA representative Johan Vibe acknowledged to us his concern that the GOC and international community would be perceived as paying ransom for the hostages under such a parallel process.

¶4. (C) Jimenez said the ELN did not plan to run candidates for election to local offices in 2007. Rather, the ELN planned to proselytize its "social reform" message and support candidates from the Polo Democratico and Liberal parties in such elections. Akerman is seeking to brief Liberal Party chief Cesar Gaviria on progress to date. When asked how the ELN would react to those parties' clear reluctance to associate with the grouping or to accept its support, Akerman and Jimenez said they expected "candidates of peace" who had an ELN endorsement to do well in many parts of Colombia. In this vein, the agreement talked about energizing "participatory democracy."

¶5. (C) The guarantors reported Restrepo intended to expand the "accompanying countries" from 3 (Spain, Switzerland, and Norway) to 10 (with the additions of Cuba, Venezuela, Panama, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, and Japan). Akerman said

Restrepo was in the process of inviting those countries to join the process and had informed the original three. Akerman and Jimenez questioned the effectiveness of a larger group. They acknowledged that such an expansion could reduce the guarantors' role but could be useful in bringing to the table financing and political pressure on the ELN.

¶6. (C) Norway's Vibe told us the expansion would help achieve financing for the process, but Norway was unclear how the parties envisaged the role of the expanded group, saying, "Venezuela and Cuba have different methods of operating." On a more positive note, in Caracas, former vice foreign minister and incoming Ambassador to Colombia Pavel Rondon told Garcia, "if you do not reach an agreement with the Colombian government you will not be welcome back in Venezuela." Akerman claimed Venezuela saw strong growth prospects for the Colombian democratic left and worried that the ELN and FARC were hampering that growth.

¶7. (C) The agreement also notes the value of continued civil society involvement in the process. Akerman said this referred to issues such as additional "Houses of Peace," the ELN's interest in a "National Convention," and the establishment of GOC-ELN working groups to hash out the concrete terms on each of the baskets.

ELN Disarmament

¶8. (C) The agreement does not mention ELN disarmament directly but Akerman said the parties had an understanding on the subject. The ELN will not run candidates for office, minimizing the short-term need to disarm; the guarantors said Colombians would never accept ELN candidates while the organization retained its weapons. The guarantors are looking for ways to place ELN weapons "beyond use" and suggested the process in Northern Ireland associated with the IRA was a possible model for the ELN. Jimenez confided that Restrepo told them the GOC would announce in early November a demilitarized zone for "humanitarian exchange" talks with the FARC. The announcement would, he hoped, encourage the ELN to relax about the possibility of FARC attacks.

ELN Fears U.S.

19. (C) The guarantors said the ELN fears a negative U.S. reaction to failed talks and worried about indictments for drug trafficking or kidnapping, or U.S. encouragement to the GOC to attack the ELN. The ELN is in part motivated to come to the table because of concerns about the U.S., Akerman emphasized.

Norway's Humanitarian Focus

10. (C) Vibe told us his government had a strong interest in humanitarian aspects of the peace process, including the release of ELN kidnap victims and the needs of displaced people. Norway wanted to see strong progress on humanitarian issues, especially kidnapping, before committing significant resources to the process, and would also seek contributions from other countries. In response to our question on what role justice would play in a GOC-ELN deal, Vibe said Norway also regarded this matter as important and was evaluating options. The ELN should realize it had to make itself a more attractive interlocutor for Colombia's parties and for the international community. It was vital for the ELN to address key humanitarian issues.

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